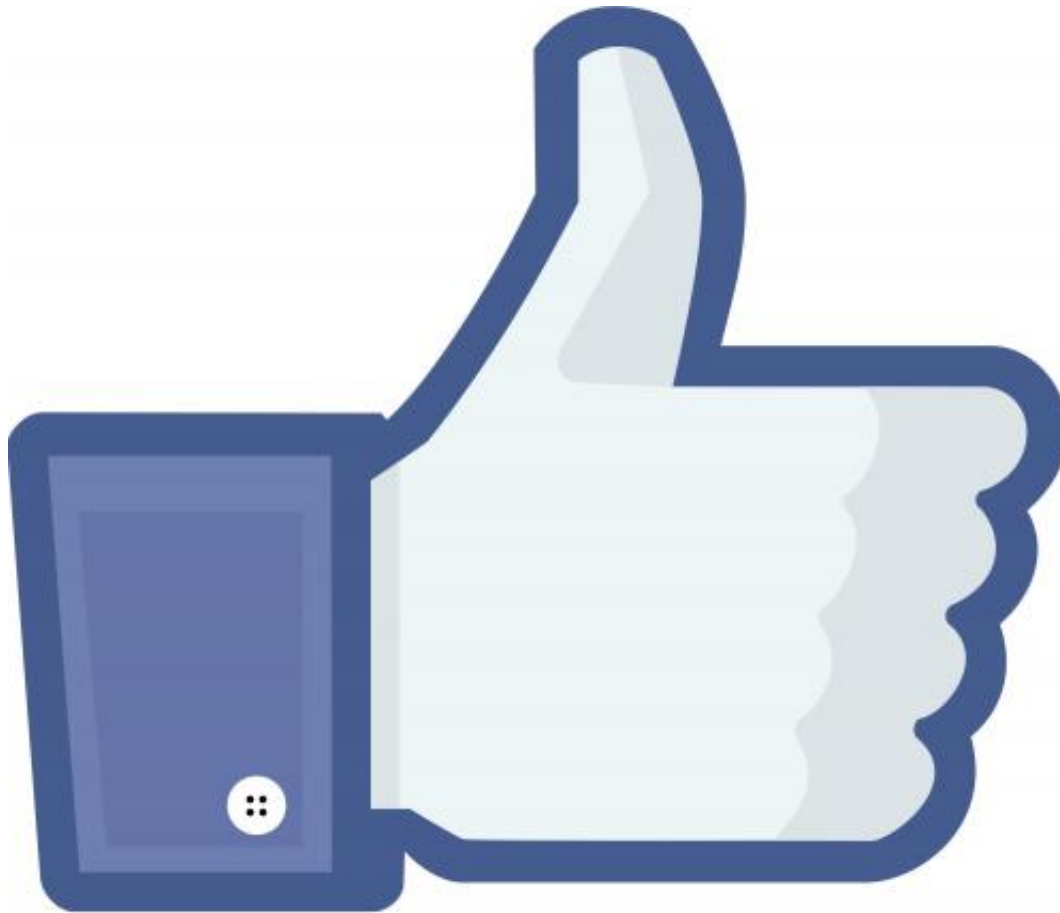# Facebook looking for meaning in user posts with 'deep learning' algorithms

September 23 2013, by Bob Yirka

(Phys.org) —Officials at Facebook have apparently decided to get serious about making sense of posts by its vast user base—according to

MIT's Technology Review, officials with the company (specifically Chief Technical Officer Mike Schroepfer) have announced that they have put together a team of eight professionals with the mission of developing what the software industry has begun calling "deep learning." Deep learning is a type of software programming where algorithms are created that allow for building simulated neural networks. Such neural networks are capable of "learning" by analyzing patterns over time. Facebook, TR reports, is hoping to use its algorithms to better target ads, and also to improve its newsfeed.

As anyone who uses Facebook knows, friending people means adding their posts to your personal newsfeed. As the number of friends grows, so too does the number of newsfeed entries. Eventually, a point is reached where it becomes untenable. To deal with this problem, Facebook has created algorithms that are meant to pick out what it believes are the most relevant posts and only send those to the newsfeed, rather than deliver them all. Thus far, this approach has met with mixed reviews from its user community. The company is hoping that giving its algorithms more smarts, will help improve the quality of newsfeeds.

Deep learning isn't something Facebook created, it's an idea that has been around for several years, Microsoft and Google have used it (Google most famously to help identify cats in YouTube videos). IBM uses it too, as part of Watson, the supercomputer that beat Jeopardy champions on television. Netflix is experimenting with similar technology to help improve its movie suggestion algorithms and might serve as a guide for how successful Facebook might expect to be with its initiative (movie suggestions are still not all that relevant). But perhaps, that's not the point at all. Instead, maybe it's the process that is the real news. Big companies are starting to spend a lot of money on neural networks with the idea of a big payoff. Surely Facebook would be happy if they could improve their newsfeed, but the real motive, as with any big business, will always be about improving the bottom line. And if

deep learning algorithms can figure out a way to coax users into clicking on more ads, than the initiative will most certainly be deemed a success by all concerned.

More information: via [TechReview](#)

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